

From:
To:
Subject: Indivisible TX Lege Weekly Actions
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Hi y'all,

The 87th Legislative Session is upon us! We'll get into the actions first, and have a brief "what's next" at the bottom. Don't forget to click through [Join Us](#) if you're looking to get more involved this session!

1. Keep pushing for Virtual Testimony

Call your State Rep and State Senator and urge them to allow public, remote testimony during this legislative session. As of today, masks will be required at the Capitol, but all hearings are still planned to happen in person. During a pandemic. That means that Texas' most vulnerable, whose lives can be most hurt or helped by legislation, will likely be left out of public testimony for fear of risking their health. It's 2021, and Austin is one of the major tech hubs of the country. We can and should do better.

For more: [Houston Chronicle: Public comment will be in-person at Texas Legislature, despite COVID](#)

Say: "Hi, I'm a constituent of Rep/Senator _____. I'm calling to urge the Rep/Senator to push for virtual, public testimony from Texans during this legislative session to mitigate risks of COVID-19 which pose an undue burden on Texas' most at-risk populations. Virtual hearings and testimony will reduce the risk and slow the spread in our state, without limiting access to citizen participation. I support a spirit of open and transparent government, and we need to ensure that can happen in 2021. (Tell any personal stories you have here). Thank you. My zip code is _____."

2. Help us run zone defense

Let us know what part of Texas you're in, and if you're able to lead or attend virtual meetings with your local state Reps and Senators. One of the most important activities we can participate in to make our state government work for us is to make sure our representatives hear from us on a regular basis. We're developing an Indivisible TX Lege one-pager and hope to meet with every State Rep and State Senator's office to make it clear what legislation we want them to support and oppose this session. We can only do that with help from all of you! Please fill out a [brief google form](#) to let us know where in Texas you live and how you're able to help out with this effort.

Watch: [How to plan in-person or virtual office visits](#)

Fill out: [Indivisible TX Lege Rep and Senator Meetings](#)

Don't remember who represents you? [Who Represents Me?](#)

3. Learn about the Texas Budget

Watch a 1-hour analysis of the Texas Comptroller's Biennial Revenue Estimate to understand how much money the Texas Legislature can invest in state services as they write the 2022-2023 budget. Alright, I know budgets aren't the most exciting thing, but "follow the money" is a saying for a reason. The Texas budget is huge, and covers things like access to healthcare, education, infrastructure, and more. Watch policy experts from Every Texan explain how the Texas budget works, where we're at, and what they recommend we do to maintain our state.

Watch: [Every Texan: 2021 BRE Analysis](#)

For more: [Texas Tribune: Recession cuts how much lawmakers can spend with the next state budget, but decrease isn't as bad as feared](#)

4. Keep our schools funded

Call Governor Greg Abbott at 512-463-1200 and TEA Commissioner Mike Morath at 512-463-8985 and urge them to continue funding schools despite pandemic-related drops in enrollment. Normally, state aid to school districts is tied to enrollment. Because of the pandemic, the Texas Education Agency maintained funding based on last year's enrollment - but only for the fall semester of 2020. We need to push to keep our schools funded, especially as they're struggling to address challenges like inadequate access to online education, remote learning, and teacher overtime. Teachers, parents, and our students cannot afford to wait on funding from the state, or their ability to teach and learn in the time of COVID will be hindered even more.

For More: [Texas Tribune: Texas schools are wary of losing funding gains lawmakers provided in 2019](#)

Read: [Raise Your Hand Texas: There is Enough Money To Fully Fund Public Ed](#)

Say: "Hi, I'm a constituent of [Governor Abbot / Commissioner Morath]. Along with many advocacy groups, I urge you to ensure that school districts' funding is not cut due to lower student enrollment caused by the COVID pandemic. The TEA should make it a priority to extend the enrollment based "hold harmless" through this school year. School districts rely on this state level aid to provide students an adequate education, especially those facing online access and other COVID-related problems. (If you're a parent, teacher, or student, share your experiences here.) (If you're an employer who relies on our public education system to produce a qualified workforce, tell your story here.) We Texans need to do the right thing for our children and the future of our state. Thank you. My zip code is ____."

A few more items to catch up on:

- [Here's our updated Call for Resignations following the January 6 incident](#)
- [Read Governor Abbott's 2021 Legislative Priorities. Notice how they have little to no substance to solve actual problems.](#)
- [Senate Reduces Threshold Needed to Pass Bills](#)

As promised up top, here's a brief timeline of what to expect in the coming months:

- From now until March 12, bills can be filed. Make sure your Texas Rep and Senator know what issues are important to you and are supporting or opposing bills appropriately. Our [Issue Huddles](#) are working hard to sift through bills. You can also find and track bills at [TLO](#), [Legiscan](#), and [Progress Texas](#).
- Committee assignments should be final this week or next - these appointments are important! Dan Patrick has already made the [appointments in the Senate](#). New Speaker Dade Phelan will make the appointments in the House.
- Starting in February, committees will take public testimony on bills they choose to take up. Committees can make or break a bill. It's important that they hear from you!

January and February can seem a bit slow, but these months are crucial to gaining alignment and building momentum in the Capitol to push or stop legislation. You can learn more about the timeline and Lege 101 at [our website](#).

Hang on to your hats, y'all. We've got a wild ride ahead of us! I know we'll be better off if we take this journey together.

Much love,
Marieke
Indivisible TX Lege

Action Network



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